

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the instant application:

1. (Currently amended) A method of manufacturing a culture medium on which plants can be grown, characterised in that it comprises the steps of:
 - a) mixing I: a particulate base material, chosen from at least one of organic and inorganic materials, with II: a thermoplastic biologically degradable binding agent[[],];
 - b) heating at least the binding agent in order to at least partly fluidise it[[],];
 - c) cooling the mixture so as to substantially solidify the binding agent and whereby at least a part of the base material becomes bonded by means of the binding agent,

wherein a first layer of base material plus binding agent is positioned, upon which a second layer of base material is positioned, and optionally a third layer of base material and binding agent is positioned;

subsequently a shaping treatment is carried out such as to fold the first layer over the second layer or to move the first and third layer at both sides of the second layer toward each other, such that the second layer is completely surrounded by the first layer;

the binding agent is fluidised with the base material; and

the binding agent is substantially solidified so as to bond the base material in the layer surrounding the second layer.

2. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein the amount of binding agent is maximally 25% by weight, ~~preferably maximally 15% by weight, more preferably maximally 10% by weight, still more preferably maximally 7% by weight, even more preferably still maximally 5% by weight, and most preferably maximally 4% by weight, related to the weight of the base material.~~

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the shaping treatment is performed between the steps b) and c).

5. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the organic base material is chosen from the group consisting of peat, compost, coconut fibres, coconut granulate, hemp fibres, straw, grass, sawdust, coffee grounds, organic waste, residue from the animal feed industry and residue from the paper industry.

6. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the inorganic base material is chosen from the group consisting of clay, soil, perlite, rock wool and other inert inorganic materials.

7. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein the particulate base material has a maximum size of 10 mm, ~~preferably a maximum of 5 mm, more preferably a maximum of 2 mm, and still more preferably a maximum of 1 mm.~~

8. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein a ~~preferably~~ biologically degradable elastomer is added during step a).

9-10. (Cancelled)

11. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein step c) is performed by means of a forced supply of, for example, a gas or a liquid, or by means of unforced natural cooling.

12. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 1, wherein a culture medium is shaped in the form of a culture plug, a culture mat, a culture block, or the like.

13. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein during the shaping treatment a compression is performed such that the shaped culture medium has up to 99%,

~~preferably up to 95%, more preferably up to 90%, and still more preferably up to 80% of the original volume of the mixture.~~

14. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 1, characterised in that the melting range of the thermoplastic, biologically degradable polymer is at temperatures ranging from 20 to 130 °C, ~~preferably from 40 to 120 °C, and more preferably from 60 to 100 °C.~~

15. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the heating in step b) is obtained by the addition of steam to the mixture.

16. (New) A method according to claim 2, wherein the amount of binding agent is maximally 15% by weight of the base material.

17. (New) A method according to claim 16, wherein the amount of binding agent is maximally 10% by weight of the base material.

18. (New) A method according to claim 17, wherein the amount of binding agent is maximally 4% by weight of the base material.

19. (New) A method according to claim 7, wherein the particulate base material has a maximum size of 5 mm.

20. (New) A method according to claim 19, wherein the particulate base material has a maximum size of 1 mm.

21. (New) A method according to claim 13, wherein during the shaping treatment a compression is performed such that the shaped culture medium has up to 80% of the original volume of the mixture.

22. (New) A method according to claim 14, characterised in that the melting range of the thermoplastic, biologically degradable polymer is at temperatures ranging from 40 to 120 °C.

23. (New) A method according to claim 22, characterised in that the melting range of the thermoplastic, biologically degradable polymer is at temperatures ranging from 60 to 100 °C.